



# MURDER DRONE

CLAIRE COX.  
PETER GALVIN &  
NATHAXNNE WALKER



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FOLIES MEURTRIÈRES



# INTRODUCTION

My hunger has a routine. Two movies, every night after my wife goes to bed. One at 10, another at 11:30 and I get to bed at a reasonable 1 A.M. To those of you thinking “1 A.M. is really late!” let me assure you, I’m not sitting there with my professor’s cap on.

There’s something that happens to your brain when you’re tired. I tried to look it up, but the first page of Google results was all sleep disorder stuff and I’ll be damned if I’m gonna click over to page two. You probably know what I’m talking about anyway. You become very receptive. Should something not make a great deal of narrative sense, “Who cares,” I say. Feed me the good stuff.

It is in this nether-realm of wakefulness that I fell in love with the concept of MURDERDRONE.

<murder>

Most of the films in this book are slasher films, and as any fan of the slasher genre will tell you, there are rules. They’re so well known that the rules themselves have borne a bastard sub-genre of meta-slashers like *Scream* (1996) and *Behind the Mask* (2006), which gleefully play with the widely accepted conventions in an attempt to make them new, or at the very least, I don’t know... ironic? Some of the more established signifiers include: a specific focus on the act of stalking victims, witnessing murders from the killer’s point-of-view, the presence of a “final girl” and, most importantly, a punk rock ethos that suggests anyone can die at any time. That one’s a biggie.

MURDERDRONE distills these slasher film rules down to their most basic components.

Whether it is the simplicity of the “man in the mask” that drives *Day of the Reaper* and *The Mad Mutilator*, the ADD free-form ambition of *Devil Story* and *Twisted Issues* or the palpable human anxiety that drives *Lunch Meat* and *Scary Movie*, these are amateur films that have latched on to one real, true fear and have made it corporeal. And then they exploit that fear again and again until it is all but meaningless.

<drone>

The term MURDERDRONE is evocative of repetition, which is something that I find comforting just before bed. The perpetual rhythm in these films is nightmarish in its own way, but each time a murder or attack occurs, the inevitability of it happening again is both more enticing and more exasperating. Each murder builds upon the last, not just in terms of quantity, but also by eliciting a sense of hopelessness and ultimately, acceptance. And so strong is our desire to demystify death, that even when we know exactly what’s coming we choose to stick around and watch anyway.

In removing all the junk that can drag down more established films, these 10 cliché-riddled, often boring, occasionally annoying films are perhaps the ultimate in slasher catharsis – a concentrated shot of murder straight to the brain.

—Peter Galvin

# EDITORIAL PREFACE

It felt important in how I encountered it, felt like something that I was missing from horror films. Having never been a true fan of straight-forward Slasher flicks, it seemed like something important. The ambient slasher. The slasher as background noise, as trance state. Murder set piece hypnosis, crappy droning synths. I was ready to love it...

MURDERDRONE, as it’s presented here, is something unusual, something most genre film fans aren’t ready for. The slasher film as aid to meditation. A preference for the abandonment of psychology. There’s more akin, herein, with the formal qualities of 20th century experimental film than with *Friday the 13th*. For me this proves infinitely more interesting, something worth exploring. Something worth throwing yourself into not just as a viewer, but as a participant.

Drone & trance forever.

—M Kitchell

# MURDERDRONE CANON

PETER  
GALVIN





# DAY OF THE REAPER

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## TIM RITTER. 1984

Ritter is something of a big fish in the very small pond that is the direct-to-video horror scene. His second feature, *Truth or Dare: A Critical Madness* (about a cuckold who copes by forcing people to play truth or dare to death) was released in 1986 at the height of the VHS boom and became a video rental smash. Ritter released the similarly plotted *Killing Spree* less than a year later. The posters for these films were memorably plastered all over the backpages of Fangoria and on the walls of your local mom-and-pop. Any respectful horror geek likely has some fond memories for Ritter's ubiquitousness in the late 80s and early 90s, if only for the fact that it seemed like one of "us" had made it.

Before the VHS chart-busters—in fact, well before he graduated high school—Ritter made a silent Super 8 flick about a hooded killer terrorizing Tequesta, Florida. A black sheet wrapped around his head and fastened by a coil of rope around the neck, the killer's slapdash look owed quite a bit to the oft-forgotten "baghead" look of Jason Vorhees in *Friday the 13th Part 2*, but for the excess fabric that dangles down the killer's back like the cape of

a cheap supervillain. Pre-dating the supernatural backstories that would drag down later entries in both the Friday and Halloween franchises, Ritter's "Reaper" was a preposterously-unstoppable killer and sometimes-cannibal with a hankerin' for teen flesh—and said flesh is never in short supply. Every part in *Day of the Reaper* is played by a teen, even the motormouth *Dirty Harry* detective hot on the Reaper's trail, humbly played by Ritter himself.

As for plot, enter final girl Jennifer. The Reaper murdered all of her friends last year and she lives in constant fear that the hooded maniac might someday return to finish the job. In an early scene, she retrieves a knife from the kitchen and reluctantly checks her dark house for Reapers. She's wearing something I want to call a "pink shorts onesie" - is that the proper term? The camera lingers on her face and body perhaps more than necessary (Ritter claims he was so smitten with his lead actress that the project nearly fell through completely) but the scene is astonishingly underlit. Instead of frustrating the viewer, the darkness casts a swath of hazy red and blue tones across Jennifer that are, frankly, gorgeous, and it's suddenly hard to blame the camera for its gluttony. While it may not have been Ritter's intention, *Day of the Reaper* is frequently a beauty to behold.

By contrast, the post-dubbing job is horrific. It obviously follows a different script from the one spoken by the actors in the scene, and you frequently hear Ritter clicking buttons on his cassette recorder to bring some semblance of natural sound effects. We aren't fooled—at one point Jennifer is seen dialing a touchtone phone to the sound of a rotary telephone! Having grown up watching horror movies on a combination of scrambled HBO feed and a boombox tuned to a local radio station that played TV audio, Ritter famously blames his disinterest in clarity on the environment to which he was accustomed at home.

As a film with a discernable plot, *Day of the Reaper* is rough as hell. But from within the theme music a MURDERDRONE vibe crystallizes: 15 warbly notes repeated ad nauseum. The notes overpower the dialogue (no great loss there)—they clip and distort in a way that makes you wonder if your speakers have blown—speed up to indicate action and slow to a comical crawl in a misguided attempt to draw out tension. The theme music reflects the structure of the film itself, in that even when it seems like we might be headed in an exciting new direction, the notes remain ever the same.



# MAD MUTILATOR

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## N.G. MOUNT. 1983

Opening your film with a grisly child murder is pretty ballsy, right? I think so. Right away you feel like you're in the hands of an unpredictable filmmaker. In fact, Norbert Georges Moutier seems like an all-around unpredictable guy. A French video clerk and horror fan who went on to make six more films in the years following *Mad Mutilator*, Moutier has taken on ninjas (*Operation Las Vegas*), aliens (*Alien Platoon*), and even dinosaurs (*Dinosaur from the Deep*). His only other horror film was a mad scientist gorefest called *Trepanator* and featured legendary French director Jean Rollin in a bit part.

There's a hint of this creative restlessness in Moutier's debut film as well. Before we even see the title card (the first of many shots that involve dripping blood directly onto the screen), *Mad Mutilator* has shocked with child murder, showcased some rather innovative point-of-view camerawork, and introduced a villain who veers perilously close to cartoonish in his appetite for violence. If it doesn't quite keep up that incredible ratio

of weirdness through its 88 minutes, it's not for lack of effort.

A Super 8 homage to American backwoods slashers, infused with the sort of "anything goes" zaniness that had recently made *Evil Dead* such a unique joy, *Mad Mutilator*'s singular playfulness often harkens back even further to the silent era. The film stock is intermittently sped up—not enough to be overly comical, just enough to unnerve—and the picture tends to skip and drop out in concert with the dubbed soundtrack, which pops in the antique manner of a needle on a vinyl record.

The murdered child was named Leticia. Her family pulled off the road so Papa could take a pit stop, and little Leticia scampered off into the woods after a plastic ball, carelessly stumbling into a fateful meeting with the local boogeyman. A man named Ogroff.

Ogroff himself is a curious creation. A half-leather mask exposes his frequently twisted grin and a knit cap holds the mask in place. You've got the usual rubber galoshes (no gloves) but this madman is also fond of what appears to be a fleece sweater vest. It helps to sell the impression that Ogroff is less a man of homicidal tendencies than a man suffering from lost marbles.

After dispatching our French family, Ogroff similarly takes care of a group of partying teens smoking and playing chess (Europeans really are sophisticated!), a logger with a chainsaw, and, finally, a horde of zombies, which feel the swing of the madman's axe from the seat of his fashionable motorcycle.

Through it all, Ogroff grunts and giggles with glee, he prances and dances...but is *Mad Mutilator* a joke? For all its winking and nudging, Moutier makes sure never to outright laugh at the genre. Similar to the sped-up sequences of film, Ogroff's actions are exaggerated but never unreasonable. I believe that Ogroff would lie in bed and lovingly jerk-off his axe, I do. Just as I believe he would saw off a man's leg and show it to him. That could happen. That did happen.

If there is a MURDERDRONE entry that approaches art, I'd say *Mad Mutilator* has a good argument. The film wallows in blood and guts but remains firmly self-conscious about what kind of conversation it intends to have with the genre, and I could see it going over gangbusters at the MOMA. If I have a bone to pick with the film, it's a tad long, even at 88 minutes. No matter, like all good MURDERDRONE flicks I tend to tune out around the hour mark anyway, and accede to an experience of pure mood.

Also, that ever-present Jess Franco muse, Howard Vernon is in it for almost four whole minutes. Très chic.





# FOLIES MEURTRIÈRES

## ANTOINE PELLISSIER. 1984

It's unclear exactly to which the "folies" of the title refers. Meurtrières means "deadly," but folies could go one of two ways. (1) There's the classic Folies Bergere, a theater space in Paris that drew crowds in the late 19th century for its lavish performances and inspired a number of imitators through the years. But (2) folie is also a term in psychiatry, basically meaning "psychosis" or "insanity." Let's just say the title is open to interpretation.

Mr Pellissier is not very well known in the West and I stumbled upon *Folies meurtrières* mostly by accident, crate-digging Super-8 horror films. Apparently Pellissier started making amateur horror films in France in the 1980s and continues to this day. The wacky part is that he's also a bonafide IRL

medical doctor. The only officially available version of *Folies meurtrières* is as an extra on the DVD for the 2009 documentary *Dr. Gore*—a look at Pellissier's dual life as practicing MD and filmmaking MF.

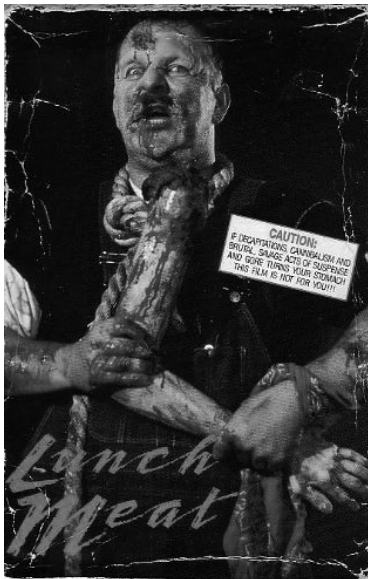
The woozy, warped tape of *Folies meurtrières* has no subtitles. That's okay, as there are maybe five lines in the film that aren't a narrator reading off the date of the murder you are about to see. The 47 minute film is just that: a series of murders without context or plot, and within each murder sequence lies a different variation on the classic slasher scenario.

The first shot of the film is a woman dressing down to a bikini, laying a towel on a rock before going for a swim. But someone is watching—a someone in dark overalls, black gloves and a workman's mask complete with plastic goggles. He also has a leg holster for his tiny axe. Cute!

If I had to make a guess of how much of *Folies meurtrières'* runtime was made up of POV shots, I would say maybe half? In fact, sometimes the killer seems to be watching his victims from two directions at once. Pellissier seems to have gone for a "more footage!" approach to this short film, assuming he would pick and choose his shots in the editing booth. In the end he must have found it difficult to choose. Our bikini girl ultimately gets a pickaxe to the head and we see no less than 17 different cuts and angles of the bloody aftermath before moving on. Definitely at least 17, I counted.

More women are stalked and killed, and I'm reluctant to give concrete numbers on how many because I found that a good deal of the fun of *Folies meurtrières* was in thinking "this one, yeah, she's gonna be the final girl, she's gonna get away!" And then SQUISH: blood on the camera. Beautiful red paint blood that went out of style in the late 80s. There's a standout chase through a rock quarry set only to the sound of the howling wind, and a lengthy game of peek-a-boo in one of those only-in-the-movies houses that are impossible to navigate because every hallway looks the same as the last hallway. In this case it just might be.

*Folies meurtrières* is perhaps the most concise distillation of the slasher movie in a book full of them. There's very little plot until the last few minutes, leaving at least 40 minutes to watch helplessly as a killer gruesomely dispatches his victims. Rinse and repeat. The lighting is blindingly harsh, amplifying the inherent staginess; never has the term "set-piege" been more apt. On the other hand, the camera is the opposite of stagy: always moving, always probing for the best angle to view each death. A bloodthirsty fiend in which I imagine anyone who takes the challenge of seeking out this rarity might recognize a bit of themselves.



# LUNCH MEAT

## KIRK ALEX. 1987

We return to backwoods country once again, but this ain't no *Texas Chainsaw Massacre*. These inbred rednecks belong to the *Deliverance* clan; stereotypically slow-minded, hygiene-deficient, eternally angry mountain men. Curiously, the misanthropy extends to our victims as well, and *Lunch Meat* must have been one of the first films to employ the contemporary slasher style of "everyone is a different shade of asshole." It makes for an especially ugly film, both visually and morally, but in his single-minded pursuit of ugliness director Kirk Alex creates and sustains a mean-spirited sense of unease that more heterogeneous slashers only achieve in fits and spurts.

Three backwoods brothers and their paw run a delivery service selling meat to a local burger shack. There's the angry one (Harley), the pervy one (Elwood) and the stupid one (Benny). Harley and Elwood form some sort of Hee Haw-style vaudeville act as they yell at each other to shut up in increasingly shrill country twang, but Benny

is that terrifying beast you see on *Lunch Meat's* VHS cover which does not lie: Benny totally spends most of the film licking different cuts of meat. Inspired as much by Frankenstein's monster as Lennie Small from *Of Mice and Men*, Benny is short on marbles and repeatedly whipped and tied to the house by Paw lest he should bring unwanted attention to the family's nefarious activities. It's never explicitly stated, but it seems that the brothers have a routine of running travelers off the road and murdering them for their tasty human meat.

Visually, *Lunch Meat* looks like smeared shit and the handheld camerawork is especially disorienting through the nth generation VHS I managed to track down. So we won't be praising or criticizing any talent that might be lurking behind the camera...there's actually a chance I would like the film less if I could consistently make out what the hell is going on. From what I can tell, five college kids are headed up to Mount Edgar for a weekend of beer and making out. Halfway there and it becomes clear that sweater-preppy Cary has forgotten to fill up the gang's red Jeep with gas—or bring lunch. As luck would have it, they pull up to a gas station just in time for Harley and Elwood's meat delivery at the next door burger shack. Cue montage of ominous close-ups of our teens eating hamburgers and making icky faces. Because they're eating people!

Like the red Jeep, the plot portion of *Lunch Meat* runs out of gas after the teens' initial bloody encounter with the backwoods brothers. From that point forward the film is a hazy collage of pained grunts and screams, mash-keyboard bedroom synths and numerous chase scenes through the woods that never seem to end with anybody actually caught or killed. What's more, a good chunk of the violence occurs off-screen, which is both frustrating and laudably surreal when dealing with a movie of this nature.

Still, such crudely-cut corners do have their upsides. The filmmakers' disinterest in taking sides in the conflict makes it difficult to predict the outcome of the film's violent encounters. The teens are given a fair shot in each of the physical confrontations, often overtaking their dimwitted attackers soundly. Conversely, a great escape from death might be followed by a sudden reversal of fortune. No matter whose side you're on, we're all going to the same place—and rarely do you see it coming.

It's tempting to afford *Lunch Meat* more consideration than it deserves purely for its nihilism—"something something commentary on the self-serving nature of man." In reality, the unrelenting ugliness is probably more due to a lack of vision on the filmmakers' part. But if the take-away for your horror film is that all happiness is temporary and no matter how hard you fight the world is just gonna try harder to break you down, well, you're doing something right.



# SATAN WAR

## BART LA RUE. 1979

Tribal drums thrum over a slideshow of abstract paintings that look like cross-sections of brain left in the blistering Los Angeles sun. The patterns appear melted—red and yellow slime. The music picks up a synth and becomes a strange amalgam of tribal and sci-fi monster mash. A narrator seemingly inspired by Leonard Nimoy in his *In Search Of...* TV series speaks circuitously regarding angels and demons. Finally the camera settles on a couple moving boxes into a house.

“This is Bill and Louise Foster. [Louise] is a public schoolteacher in a large western city in the United States. In the summer of 1976, she and her husband moved into this small three-bedroom home. This was their first house since their recent marriage. Until then they had lived in a tiny apartment near her school. The purchase price was extremely reasonable...too reasonable.”

*Satan War* is not a slasher. You’ve caught me—by my own definition of MURDERDRONE there’s little reason the film should appear in this book. But allow me a chance to explain: shot and acted like a TV crime re-enactment, or a 70s safety video on ‘How Not to Act in a Haunted House,’ director Bart LaRue’s 1979 film is a truly mystifying piece of work that belongs squarely in our tribe of late night brain-melters.

Bill and Louise haven’t been in their house an hour and strange things are already happening. Louise hangs a golden cross on the wall and it twitches, wiggles and shakes, finally turning itself upside down. The coffee boils over and it drips down the stove thick and chunky like chocolate pudding. Someone keeps knocking on the front door but there’s no one there. Over the next two days, the freak phenomena builds towards a violent assault on Louise by an unseen force and this leaves the Fosters desperate to find some means of banishing the presence from their home.

Pre-dating the Barbara Hershey-starrer *The Entity* by several years, Louise’s violation at the hands of a ghost seems much too similar not to have been inspired by the same real life case of “spectral rape” that made national news when Doris Bither invited a group of paranormal researchers to her Culver City home in 1974. But the film is much too cinematic and drawn-out to be an educational document, and not nearly exploitative enough to work as a straight horror film. So what the hell is it? A religious scare film? Who is Bart LaRue and what did he think he was making when he released *Satan War* into the world? Hard to say.

The “entity” of *Satan War* may not be a traditional slasher/boogeyman but is certainly a predator. It hunts the Fosters from within the music, repetitive stabs of synth and ookie-spookie female wah-wah vocals that bleed from the very edges of the screen. It peers at them from the rolls in the tape. It lives in the perpetual darkness that envelops the couple and threatens to swallow them whole—visible only in the moonlight on Bill’s twisted face as he tiptoes through his dream home with a pistol. The ending to *Satan War* sees the hungry darkness manifest in the most mind-bogglingly literal way, as a figure emerges from the inky black brandishing a kitchen knife.

It’s impossible to recommend *Satan War* without warning you what occurs at the hour mark. A sudden return to the abstract paintings and tribal drums that began the film, our Nimoy narrator reappears to espouse information regarding the traditional ceremonies of voodoo while a group of dancers perform on screen. That’s right, the film ends with 16 minutes of traditional voodoo dancing. The textbook-style narration over the dancing feels as superfluous as the information about angels and demons that opened the film; it’s possible that these were post-production inserts made in effort to distance the film from the stigma of “horror” by suggesting its purpose is educational. And if you buy that I’ve got a house in Los Angeles you might be interested in...



# BLOODSTREAM

## MICHAEL J MURPHY. 1985

The first time I tried to watch *Bloodstream* I fell asleep halfway through. Six months later, I tried again and, with the helpful application of toothpicks to my eyelids, I was able to stick it out. I'm glad I did. The first half is pretty bollocks (to use the British parlance) but the film culminates in what might be the most metatextual MURDERDRONE moment ever made.

It's impossible to understand why *Bloodstream* exists without knowing a thing or two about its creator, film-obsessed Brit, Michael J. Murphy. Making movies began early for Murphy, whose first feature at 15 years-old garnered a profile on the local TV news as "the world's youngest film director." Following numerous 8mm experiments, Murphy took on a job as a trainee at Hammer Studios and soaked up as much knowledge as would fit in a 16 year-old's mind—but it's hard to be on a film set every day and not want to be making your own films.

Murphy made a number of shorts, usually on 16mm, and sometimes pulled together enough money to shoot a feature but frequently found his work ripped apart and sometimes outright stolen by distributors. In a fit of frustration and rage, he decided to deliberately make a Video Nasty, a bitter pill of violence in which he murdered every person who had ever wronged him.

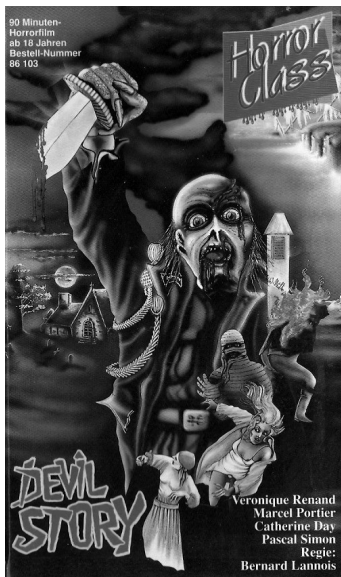
Of course, all the names were changed – this couldn't be an outright threat. Standing in for Murphy in *Bloodstream* is Alistair, a passionate director of horror films who is first seen having his newest film, the titular "Bloodstream," torn to shreds by bigshot producer William King: "You do know what kind of audience this is aimed at? A take-away curry, after the pub. Blood and tits. A few scares, a few thrills. Nothing too demanding." King appears to destroy the VHS tape of "Bloodstream" and send Alistair packing, but little does he know that King intends to remove Alistair's name from the project and sell it worldwide for cheap.

From here the story splinters. Alistair goes back to his flat and binges on horror tapes, watching five-cent homages to zombie flicks, slashers, mummies, Milligan-esque monster men and Rollin-inspired fake vampire fangs. Every few minutes he gets up and puts in another tape, smoking and stewing in darkness. Witches, cannibals, even a post-nuke flick. These homages take up most of the film.

A more interesting story is happening at the same time. King's secretary, Nikki, has fallen in love with Alistair and hatches a rather convoluted scheme to find and murder all of King's associates in one night and frame King for their deaths. High from his horror binge, Alistair agrees, but he wants them to see him in the reaper costume from his film, and he wants to film the murders with his personal camera, a one-two punch of irony.

As a product borne of wish-fulfillment, you can practically feel the snap of Murphy's catharsis during the murders. They're brutal, unsentimental and there is never a moment of hesitation from Alistair. In experiencing a non-stop deluge of terrible, pointless horror films, Alistair has become the character that best reflects the average MURDERDRONE viewer, and the film ends with our protagonist falling deeper and deeper into an actual "murdertrance."

Even if all those horror homages have a purpose, they do tend to drag *Bloodstream* down. One can't help wondering whether Murphy has slotted some old short films together in order to bring his real story to feature length. I certainly wouldn't blame anyone who finds themselves checking out from time to time, while Murphy indulges himself once again. But the truth is, *Bloodstream* never was about you or me. This is Murphy's version of "flipping the bird," and you better believe he's gonna have the last word.



# DEVIL STORY

## BERNARD LAUNOIS. 1985

For the first few minutes you would be forgiven for thinking *Devil Story* was a complete knock off of *Mad Mutilator*. A horrible-looking man with a horseshoe crown of red hair stands in the middle of the forest, decked out in an SS uniform and surrounded by corpses. He grunts wordlessly and shifts a knife from hand to hand while trying not to look at the camera. The corpses are so fresh the blood continues to pump from their bodies in fits and squirts. Thus begins a montage of death while the score pulses in earnest: the man punches a woman to death with a metal-studded glove, stabs a man who has pulled his car off the road, and shoots an old woman in the face with a shotgun. Only when the credits roll do they lend the man a name—one he never achieves within the film itself—“Pascal Simon as Monster.”

Filmed in France but possibly set in Florida, *Devil Story* is not about Monster. Not really. It’s hard to say what exactly it is about, something to do with an ancient curse, a mummy and possibly a ghost horse. Actually it’s possible

everyone is a ghost.

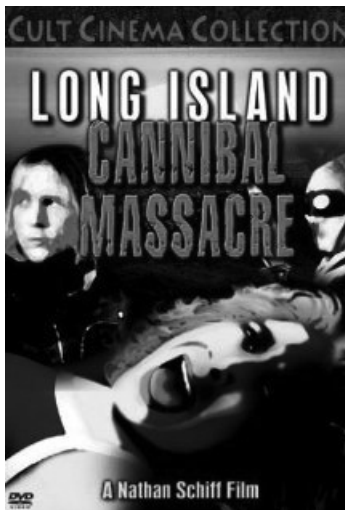
A man and woman driving through the countryside stop to fix a flat and, before you know it, The Woman has scuttled off into a nearby field, hypnotized by the yowling of a black cat. The cat leaps at her and scratches her hands to high heaven. Her partner insists they go and take a load off in a nearby town. Dark now, the couple pulls up to an old castle signposted as “creepy” by that old organ standard, Bach’s Toccata in D Minor. *Devil Story* features a number of these nods to classic Universal horror films, not least of which is the presence of the mummy. I’m getting to that, hold on.

The castle/B&B is run by an old man who regales our couple with a tale of pirates sinking ships off the coast in order to steal their precious cargo from the wrecks. The story goes that one of the ships was carrying crates from Cairo, and the pirates who sunk it were never seen again. They are survived by a mother and son (Monster) who keep the cemetery on the edge of town. Meanwhile a horse outside the castle begins to whinny and The Old Man vows to shoot that goddamn beast if it’s the last thing he does.

To go on describing the plot would be useless. No one hates reviews that amount to synopses more than I, but in the case of *Devil Story* the plot is something that seems to keep slipping through your fingers, leaving you desperate to connect the dots. There are long sequences of The Woman screaming, the horse neighing, Monster groaning and spitting blood, and The Woman running away (from the cat, the horse, and eventually a mummy that has emerged from a sarcophagus that was in the graveyard). Every few minutes we check in on The Old Man shooting his gun in the air at that damn horse. If the MURDERDRONE mantra is “90% people wandering around getting murdered,” then *Devil Story* shifts that ratio towards “90% man shooting at a damn horse.”

An actor who starred in a handful of Eurocine productions in the 70s, director Bernard Launois certainly had the connections to get his film distribution and even a semi-decent English dub. His resume suggests he was best known in comedy circles, and at times *Devil Story* seems like it might have been intended as a spoof of 80s horror, taking on slashers, monsters and dream-like confusion with equal abandon.

With no choice but to judge the film straight, I’ll go with “fascinating mess.”



# LONG ISLAND CANNIBAL MASSACRE NATHAN SCHIFF. 1980

Nathan Schiff's first two films, *Weasels Rip My Flesh* and *Long Island Cannibal Massacre*, occupy the purest niche of DIY filmmaking. No budget, no experience, and a whole lot of guts—literally, real animal guts. Filmed in and around Long Island, NY, Schiff's worldview extended no further than the empty fields, cold-looking beaches and slurry-thick accents that populate his hometown. Neither film was made with the intention of getting into video shops; Schiff and his friends John Smihula and Fred Borges were just

local boys having a bit of fun, screening the films to their families and friends. Few people knew these films even existed before their DVD release in 2004.

As *Long Island Cannibal Massacre* begins, we're in comfortable territory: a woman undresses among the tall grass and lights a cigarette. A man wearing a pillowcase with goggles over his head smashes her in the head with a pickaxe, mows her face off with a lawnmower and carefully assorts all the bloody bits into black garbage bags.

The next scene finds Inspector Cameron (Smihula), and his girlfriend Susan standing on an outcropping of rocks and staring out at the ocean. Soon Cameron will discover a bloody head buried in the sand and become caught up in the disgusting world of cannibal meat delivery. But right now, he's just a dude having some deep thoughts.

Perhaps seeing something in his far-away eyes that worries her, Susan asks "Hey, what are you thinkin' about?"

"Nothing much," he replies, "I was just imagining how twisted this world really is."

You can argue this is a silly thing to say—in fact I'll acquiesce before you even get the chance. But it's also a really weird thing to say—when you've seen enough of backyard splatter flicks that you can predict all the beats, it's moments like this one that cause you to sit up and take notice. The weird moments where you get to see a bit of what the people behind the camera might have been like. Just what kind of a person spends their weekends making a film called *Long Island Cannibal Massacre*, anyway? In Smihula's case, this is a quirk of personality so strangely specific that it shifts the Cameron character from potential audience surrogate/victim-in waiting into an honest-to-God human individual.

There are a number of quietly humanizing sequences like this one. In a later scene, we spend some time with Jack (Borges) as he speaks to a garbage bag full of body parts, growing ever more defensive as he imagines the silent corpse blaming him for its current lifeless state. A breathtaking meeting between Jack and his cannibal father is filmed completely one-sided: his father's otherworldly voice booms from the trees while his face remains hidden. The father is less a villain than an imagined demon upon his son's shoulder, encouraging Jack to continue murdering even though he feels deeply guilty about doing so (daddy issues were big in the 80s).

*Long Island Cannibal Massacre* cost \$900 to make and you can hear the sound of the Super 8 camera whirring in every scene, but compared to a screw-about goof like *Day of the Reaper*, Schiff's film feels incredibly adult, even world-weary. That both Schiff and Tim Ritter made their respective films at 17 is all the more confounding. The final scene of Schiff's film involves a green-skinned leper severing all of Borges' limbs from his body one-by-one with a (real! moving!) chainsaw. The gore-soaked explicitness of it all is near overwhelming, but I can't deny that Schiff's characters have earned themselves the right to release some tension.



# SCARY MOVIE

## DANIEL ERICKSON.

### 1989/1991

The original *Scary Movie* was an amateur production filmed just outside Austin, Texas. We can assume the title in this case was also a goof—the production company listed in the credits is ‘Generic Movies, Ltd.’ and the title is joined by an on-screen UPC code, so there’s a theme brewing there. Your guess is as good as mine though, as there’s not a lot of information available about the film.

*Scary Movie* is set in a haunted house. There are fog machines, strobe lights (blue then pink), sweaty night terrors, and everywhere you look lurks the Texas boogeyman, which I’m told is a reaper in a cowboy hat. We get the backstory out

of the way ASAP—a mistrial has resulted in the release of a vicious serial killer, briefly seen drooling in the backseat of a police vehicle. Across town, an unbelievably anxious Warren (played by Oscar-nominated John Hawkes) has been dragged to a Halloween haunted house by his obnoxious friend, Brad, and he is hating every minute of it.

As a specific snapshot of a 1989 Texas haunt, *Scary Movie* delivers. Lovers of Halloween time-capsule grunge, *this is your jam*. With Warren and his obnoxious buddies stuck in line for half the movie, the camera has plenty of time to gawk at the crowd’s charmingly homemade costumes, and it seems like all the extras are getting drunk, grillin’ meat, and foolin’ around.

Once Warren and his friends gain entrance to the house, things get substantially more interesting. See, the serial killer’s police transport has crashed and he’s nowhere to be found. And some kid has left the back door to the haunted house wide open. Halloween revelers are shuffled from room to room to scream and laugh at the various bloody murder scenes, but are they watching real murders? Has the killer turned this shack of spooky fun into a real-life charnel house of death?

*Scary Movie* screened just once, at Houston WorldFest 1991, and was passed around on VHS for a while afterward in local rental shops. Director Daniel Erickson has said he doesn’t believe *Scary Movie* is a horror film and I think he was right to distance his film from the genre. Despite the obvious title, anyone looking for a Halloween-set slasher is definitely going to come away disappointed. *Scary Movie* is disturbing, just not in the way you expect. I don’t want to give anything away, but the short version is I was ultimately a lot more tickled in the brain than the gut.

Genre semantics aside, the best reason to watch *Scary Movie* is future-Mr. Hollywood John Hawkes. Scene after scene of sweaty, shaky, screaming Warren completely losing his shit—it’s not the sort of bizarre performance that gets you awards but it is a thrill to behold. There’s a scene where Warren falls into a snake pit and the way he repeatedly leaps in the air in an attempt to escape their fangs puts Crispin Glover’s spastic dancing in *Friday the 13th: The Final Chapter* to shame. Yeah, it’s that good.



# TWISTED ISSUES

## CHARLES PINION. 1988

*Twisted Issues* belongs to the profane halls of the shot-on-video horror genre. We've covered a lot of amateur productions in this book, but when the entry-fee to making a movie is a drugstore VHS tape, things typically get unprofessional real quick. Thankfully, an atypically frenzied style elevates director Charles Pinion's punk doc/skate-video/slasher/performance-art piece to a realm beyond most of its ilk—a world where death and violence are truly meaningless.

Shot on VHS in Gainesville, Florida, *Twisted Issues* begins with backwards vocals over a black screen. The indistinguishable words are a both a prayer before we sin, and an invitation to the trance that Pinion sets out to create in the audience over the next four minutes. Fuzzy footage of Ronald Reagan, fighter jets, nukes, Hitler, space shuttles and soldiers assault the screen, but these combative images are cross-cut with serene moments of suburban kids smoking and skating.

"America is going to hell," he seems to say. "Fuck it, who even cares anymore?" Very punk.

These skaters ultimately end-up on director Charles Pinion's own doorstep. Charles is a kind of narrator for the film—we are not seeing reality, we are seeing a reality of his design. In addition to the montage that introduced the film we're watching, the TV broadcasts images from around town and Charles watches that too. Today, the channel is set on a young skatekid named Paul.

When we first meet Paul, he's dressed in a karate gi, eating a greasy cheeseburger on his porch. Paul is a pretty straight-forward guy: he loves his skateboard and he loves karate. Across town, four rowdy punks recklessly cruise the streets of Gainesville, catcalling pedestrians, smoking and drinking cans of cheap beer. There's no professional lighting in this movie, instead a flashlight strobes over their faces and we get their features one a time. The gang is a rather coarse group, cursing, flicking each other off and barking orders for more beer. When you are a punk, this is known as friendship.

Worlds collide when Paul skates home from a punk show and the gang sees an easy mark. Despite some badass karate moves, Paul is no match for the moving vehicle and is mowed down in a parking lot. In its most absurd sequence, Paul's corpse is reclaimed by a mad scientist who decides to bring him back to life. It's a mystery how he accomplishes this miraculous act—the film cuts to gruesome real-life slaughterhouse footage, and when we cut back the scientist is chillin', smoking a joint and Paul is alive. Let the real slaughter begin.

Music is the key to unlocking *Twisted Issues*. The film cuts back-and-forth from Paul's revenge upon the punks that murdered him to teenagers dancing and moshing during live performances from local Gainesville bands.

*Twisted Issues* was originally conceived as a *Decline of Western Civilization*-esque profile of the Gainesville punk scene, but it switched gears during production. Nothing of any sense happens for long stretches, but if you vibe with the grind of the music it can start to feel transcendent—like everything is actually happening all at once. One-by-one Paul makes the gang members bleed, and the mushy VHS colors leak in parallel, spread through neon bedrooms and back alleys like a fog.

As *Twisted Issues* draws to a close, the violence Paul has inflicted on the city spills over into Charles' own life, but there are no real consequences for our characters in a world where death is impermanent and apathy is all-consuming. Fuck it, as long as someone is watching, the show will go on.





Production still from *Day of the Reaper*

# NOTES ON MURDER- DRONE

NATHAXNNE  
WALKER



## NOTES ON MURDERDRONE 1

In murderdrone there is a drone, or a series of drones, or overlapping drones and, crucially, there is a minimum of plot set-up for a maximum of chase=stalking sequences. This makes murderdrone a specific subset of the slasher wherein the slasher has individual set-pieces, 'kills' that are modular and rated on technical achievement. In murderdrone it is like a hillside collapse, a lava flow, a slurry spill. What murderdrone is about is escaped containment: everything repeats too much, goes on for too long, is indistinct. Narrative becomes ambient. In murderdrone the kill forgets what it is doing or forgets the economy of what is going on: it is about the chase, not the kill, which is usually perfunctory. This is a wending, hiding, stumbling, breathing-in hard. This is not 'cat-and-mouse' but rather all the tension of that relationship drained and replaced by a weird slackness. Murderdrone is awesome because it is fulfilling in the moment, not in the payoff. It repudiates the much-theorized transactional model of horror: we pay, they bleed. This is a being-along-with, a learning-to-live-within, even as we are all dying together, some at faster rates than others.

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## LUNCH MEAT (1987)

*Lunch Meat's* opening theme is percussive and repetitive, like a sequencer perseverating, like a drum machine inscribing bad things in its consciousness so it doesn't forget. Listen: it is not going to forget. You are not going to forget. You are going to want to forget and you are not going to forget. You are going to want to forget and you are not going to forget. You are going to want to forget and you are not going to forget. There are bells that don't toll but cut off sharply, like limbs might be cut off sharply. There is no fake resonance. These are objects among other objects. Everything is carried off by an ill wind or into a chasm, a really shallow chasm, full up of dark.

Pursued or pursuer, stumbling through floodwaters, through swamplands, grunting and huffing, out

of breath. Running with the corpse of a bird that isn't a corpse of a bird yet, still flapping and squawking, and shaking underarm. Pursued, then, for sure, by guys with plaid shirts, red and blue, and caps, and weapons. It's a chicken, a guy carrying a chicken, with someone's blood, his or the chicken's or someone else's, all over his right arm. This is how *Lunch Meat* begins.

Purple drink straight from the container. Restrained and caged. A patriarchal gang with an actual patriarch, run on violence and money.

HI-FI

HI-FI

HI-FI

'a mad dog with shit for brains'  
a desperate situation indeed.

hunger, excretion, scarcity of resources down on the farm, or what is left of it.

HOLLYWOOD  
tilts into view. a scarcity of resources piled into illusory wealth manufactured through illusion.

A car full of people on the freeway with post-feathered hair and aviator sunglasses. This is another family, one oblivious to its wealth and privilege.

'Nightmare Is More Like It'

Mountaineering. A negative ascent. Backlit, frames freeze until snapping out of it, an absence seizure fractured like ice floes, a spattered duration.

A soft drink, a hard time.

the hills like  
drugged lions like cheap loops like

*Where's the Lunch Meat? How the Hell am I going to make a sandwich without the Lunch Meat? Did somebody forget to pack the Lunch Meat?*

A Burger Joint with Disused Outdoor Cafeteria Seating next to AUTO PARTS SERVICE which claims to have 'Wilbur's World Famous Juicy Burgers' is where this is going, where this car which has run out of gas is going. This is in an urban sprawl. There is a busy highway. This is not isolated. This is commerce. There is a taped-on OPEN sign.

*This Whole Trip Looks Like A Mistake To Me*

The Synth Holds and Slides Like A Toilet Flushing. This can't be good.

There is a jazzy pseudo-piano flourish. This is their territory, the orange men in the plaid and the caps and the grease. ALL DELIVERIES IN REAR / ELECTRIC SERVICE

Leaking Garbage Bags full of  
Potential Revenue

*God I Can't Eat This*

STOCK UP ON PARTY SUPPLIES

*You got piss all over the seat you  
scum-sucking pig*

Grease stains the skyline.

A whole landscape composed of rendered fat; an oscillation from the depths unsettles. It is not a real piano. it is not an electric piano.

A detour that is a real detour.

A detour that is not a real detour.

Bad handclaps, faint echo

*I just don't want to get stuck  
in these woods*

MY GOD HIS FACE IS COVERED IN BLOOD

*A Corpse That Is Not Yet A Corpse Spills  
From The Shadows, From A Copse In The  
Leaking Woods*

Eddie Gets Stabbed In The Throat  
Eddie Who Had Been Driving  
Eddie Who Was Going To Turn The Car  
Around  
Eddie Who Had Had It Has Got It Now

it is as this point that the screams are looped. first one scream, then the next, then still another one on top, and that one is looped. it is a dense pattern of screams looped one on top of the other, but not so dense they do not form a thin, pliable material, to bend and flutter in the wind, like ragged plastic barely covering furniture in the back of a truck on the highway.

a pickaxe or shovel whirled about decapitates someone. it lands in the dirt with a thud, blood obscuring the eyes, blood feathered into the post-feathered hair. like a dog worrying a bone, like a marrow spilling from bone into the street. restrained and loaded into the truck, still snarling. a throat torn from its mounting.

I HATE THIS FUCKING FAMILY

I HATE THIS FUCKING VALLEY

to gnaw and pacify,  
LUNCH MEAT LUNCH MEAT LUNCH MEAT

A chicken pecking at a severed hand

LUNCH MEAT  
LUNCH MEAT  
LUNCH MEAT

a bowl upturned, bowed metal detoured  
turned into a hamburger patty

HAMBURGER MAN  
HAMBURGER MAN

A chicken pecking at a severed hand

chicken of the earth/chicken of the  
dearth/chicken of the dirt

HI-FI  
HI-FI  
HI-FI

*Get Off That Meat Boy!*  
*I SAID Get Off That Meat!*

flayed alive, chicken onlookers

stigmata unanchored, loose in the drift

war drums sound for the hunt  
garbage compactors crumple gunk

a growl clearing/a clearing growl

&&&

the sound of college kids being turned  
into money. it can be slow going, it can  
be

two black eyes,  
greying at the temples

or

egg whites, spray paint

a thrown-axe into a thorax.

A SHITLOAD FULL OF CANDY BARS  
A SHITLOAD FULL OF CANDY BARS

Now he's dead, now he's dead now  
go on, go on, go on without me  
a shoe full of blood, a truck horn in a  
wind tunnel.

grasp the knife like a baby elephant  
grasps a feather: to be able to fly

drop-in//axe-handle to face

a baited trap, a flight into a ravine

fake strings shudder or sustain

only a flesh wound its only a flesh  
wound its only a flesh wound its only  
a flesh wound its only a flesh wound  
its only a flesh wound its only a flesh  
wound its only what will a killdeer do  
when it actually is wounded?

the tree is crying blood. an error  
occurred. please try again later.

hiding under the car to avoid the gaze  
of the severed head to avoid the gaze of  
the unsevered head to avoid the gaze of  
the head which talks.

what's that guy doing in the middle of  
the street what's that guy doing in the  
middle of the street what's that guy  
doing whats that guy whats that guy  
doing in the middle of the street whats  
that guy

*in opposing directions, not  
looking back*

-----

### **BLOODSTREAM (1985)**

*whipsaw & flailing wild  
muffled as like from behind a door or  
under the ground or the apartment  
below.*

*the foreground is picked out by bright  
light or it is not-not.*

*lightning forks and then tears open his  
abdomen and lightning forks and  
tears off his face the skull is  
externalized and masklike. the eyes  
fall out of the skull. the sockets are  
empty, to face and echo and magnify the  
screaming. this is on a monitor. this is  
growl off-screen. the whole goes up in a  
blaze: death or its representative  
assumed to be on fire, evaluated on a  
monitor.*

This has been a movie-within a movie.

*Bloodstream* is a movie that is always  
waking up from a movie into another  
movie and falling back asleep into yet  
another movie.

*Bloodstream* is a movie that knows that  
movies are externalized dreams that can  
be collectively shared, on film, as film.

*Bloodstream* is an homage to sitting at home, mentally ill and smoking uncontrollably, watching hundreds of video cassettes of movies you've never heard of before but just got from the video store because they had enticing covers.

*Bloodstream* chooses cheap horror movies not out of material necessity, but out of love and reverence for what they can achieve with the force of their elemental powers.

*Bloodstream* also owes as much to Elizabethan/Jacobean revenge dramatics as it does to traditional slasher operations: the wronged hero, the outsized response, the gothickly disguised identity, the encouraging partner, the lure of wealth, and most of all the loss/reformation of identity in revenge. Something also is owed to 'The Video Nasty Controversy' of late-70's/early 80's Britain where specific films were put on an index of suspect works under official approbation. The idea that the overuse of horror movies (or comic books, or heavy metal, D&D, etc) would lead to psychosis and violence is sort of tacked onto the end of *Bloodstream* but dovetails neatly with its overall concerns.

There is Deformed Jester Dungeon  
Torture Theatre!

There is a Witch-Burning extravaganza,  
complete with shrieking at the stake as  
the fires mount!

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### **NOTES ON MURDERDRONE 2**

The dilation of time surrounding trauma, fight-or-flight, the moments leading up to death. As spacetime warps in and around the mouth of a black hole, the presence of death warps the lived experience of time, adrenaline amping up reaction time & the speed of thought, thus slowing down perceived duration. This is a functional attribute of MURDERDRONE: normative events like driving in a car with friends, going to the store, filing paperwork, drinking coffee, etc are the bulk of what happens, but if someone appears with an axe or a knife or a gun and begins

a targeted chase through a known or foreign or enclosed space at whatever speed, all of those events compress and recede to relative unimportance and the minutes, hours or days spent running and hiding and screaming to attempt assurance of continued survival stand out in sharp relief, every moment an eternity of immediate focus. Markers of time which generally determine experience are by necessity ignored or become superfluous. There is only an elongated present, impinged upon by hysteria and exhaustion. This can result in a hyperreal clarity, a sense of never having been more alive. There is no logical denouement to this situation. There is only the eventual shutting down of the fight-or-flight response. This can take minutes, hours, days, months, years. It can never happen. It can happen in all all-at-once which seems to consume the whole of experience forever and evermore. This is MURDERDRONE.

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### **FOLIES MEURTRIERES (1984)**

This film has a score that literally sounds like if you were to drown the master tapes of John Carpenter's *Halloween* synth tracks in a sink until they warped beyond recognition. This statement is only true if John Carpenter had performed his score on a Casio Keyboard he purchased at S-Mart that had its rhythm presets button broken off into the 'always on, high tempo' position. But this is only before it shifts into twinkly French Lounge Disco as something like actual 1984 Home Movies filmed on 1964's state-of-the-art home camera technology, as long as your home movies contained shots of your stalker along with the walks on the beach at sunset. Your stalker is dressed in the most stalkerish outfit ever, with a carpenter's belt, mechanic's jumpsuit, giallo gloves, and motorcycle boots. The ostensible non-stalker subject of the home movies is naked and oblivious to the stalking. Really this might be the most glorious sunset ever recorded on film, which is saying something. The lens flares here are exceptionally great, like so great Michael Bay would be reduced to tears great. The sunset ends and switches to:

INT -

Mega-zoom! From inside to outside - nighttime noises! Indirect but super-glareful lighting! Like in a bad dream, stalkee keeps doing the dishes despite there being stalker getting a knife out of the kitchen drawer (why are they not prepared? they have a carpenter's belt and a hammer or something?) The wordless vocalization over the drone adds to the rising tension.

EXT. -

Stalkee outside and looking at the moon! How is she still alive? How did she not notice the stalker mere feet away from her brandishing a knife out of her own kitchen? She comes back inside to light a cigarette. Now we get to see that the stalker is wearing a pillowcase over the head a la Jason. They put such work into the rest of the outfit, and a pillowcase? That is not going to sell a lot of retro action figures! Or is it? Well, I guess like if Jason had cut out all of the eye-area and wore safety glasses—that is smart. I mean, stalking and killing beautiful women in their homes is probably the kind of thing that you would want to wear eye protection for. A stabbing at her hand through the door in a scene weirdly evocative of *Inside* over 20 years later. Blood comes out of nowhere to run down the walls of the room she is in. She opens a closet door and some guy is there with paint or ash on his face, bloody and chained up to the closet wall! He grabs her and chokes her out, pulling her toward him! What is going on here??? She just is like, NO! and climbs out the window. Thank God someone just left that pickaxe outside the house! This is the most opportunistic stalker/killer I've ever seen in a movie! First the knife and now this! Now she is banging on someone's shuttered window? door? By this point, the music has left the scene entirely and nighttime noises are going full force. So, the KILLER opens the door and kicks her in the face! Pickaxe right through the skull! Full Stop! We get to see this from many different angles to maximize the gush. She bleeds out from her third eye and her mouth into the sand. The full moon glares.

Thus the first 10 minutes of *Folies Meurtrieres* play out.

MURDERDRONE degree zero!!!!

One of the things about the slasher and MURDERDRONE is that they both invite and frustrate a 'modular' structural reading. They are a weird admixture of ambient drift and episodic structure. *Folies Meurtrieres* makes this explicit through its chapter-based format. *FM* is composed of a narrative drive so pure it almost cancels itself out. By relying on the barest outlines of what makes a slasher a slasher, it opens itself up to environmental cues and obsessive repetition. This is similar to the structural concerns of all slashers, but pushed to the nth power, *FM* gains its power & tension from the repetition of the stalk/murder scenario, cutting out literally everything else. If you boiled down a slasher to extended, contextless set-pieces and then let them drift in a vacuum, you would find this film.

*Folies Meurtrieres* has one of the best slasher movie endings ever. And what is great is that a) it Totally Follows from what came before while b) being Totally Unexpected, as what came before was so disconnected/episodic and c) completely alters not the facts, but also the affective orientation to what was just watched. As far as I am concerned, it is in the very highest tier of slashers and all films.

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### **DAY OF THE REAPER (1984)**

sun-baked concrete, crumbling, abandoned asphalt turning gray and cracking in the sun. shadows cast inside the breezeway, patches of sand between the edges of grass. faux-deco concrete work mingles with actual-deco concrete work on slabs and within screens. tail lights in pools of rainwater after it rains on asphalt. everything smears together.

not an actual castle, but a castle in a videogame, with a pixelated vampire that you know is a vampire because you read the description on the box before throwing the box away to play the game. it is a vampire due to context. because the castle is a vampire's castle.

wavy glass insets, whole fields of squelchy blues, intermittently avoid themselves and again.

a slab of light between curtain-drapes, itself a kind of severing.

the sky is pink  
the sky is yellow  
the sky is orange  
the sky is violet

there is a place past which  
there is a place past which  
there is a place past which  
the screen blotches out in saffron.  
it is the end of legibility.  
what can't be seen is past there, not  
buried, but flooded, maybe dreaming.

the wind says it has arrived. it says  
this. the wind is seen by its effects. the  
wind is its voice. the wind is its own  
projection.

abandoned mattresses with a floral  
print in places those flowers could  
never grow.

pine needles make for. sap runs in  
tangles down. to pretend for a kind of  
amber. it isn't.

saw palmetto //// saw palmetto  
a manner of recognition not dependent  
upon sight.

grasses matted, dog-circled. sea-  
grapes make arches over. that is how  
to walk to the beach and then into  
the waves, if any.

tile plaza, slatted wooden benches.  
grass-lands cut into polygons.

dried seaweed in clumps like ink  
dragged across the surfaces by a  
clogged pen which cannot write any more  
but leaks from its body.

a screen of Australian Pines. These  
will already look blurry, as if seen  
without glasses. the shadow cast-iron,  
like a lava field cooled.

shells are crushed and used in the  
material of the roadway. the color of the  
screen door.

the pines so far apart that only an  
artificial wind may be coursed through  
them. to make a hollow, to allow for an  
escaping, an escarpment.

tangled like hair unearthed, still  
attached.

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### NOTES ON MURDERDRONE 3

The slasher is civilization's limit  
problem, what defines it at the borders.  
MURDERDRONE is what is left when

civilization is taken out of the  
picture. A movie like *Lunch Meat* views  
civilization as a problem concerning  
both the kids and the family of killers—  
how to get money, how to survive, how to  
attain and maintain scarce resources.  
Here capitalism is the omnipresent  
threat to all life, and MURDERDRONE  
is a solution to nothing, it is the abyss  
for everything at the end, the void  
yawning underneath. The Void cannot be  
identified with, cannot be reasoned with.  
It is Absolute Negation. MURDERDRONE  
is the irruption of the Void into the  
Real. Discontinuity, dilation and  
drift, the edges of the frames, the  
spaces between actions, this is where  
MURDERDRONE is.

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### LONG ISLAND CANNIBAL MASSACRE (1980)

The opening shots of the sound, the  
marsh, the reeds, the wind, the leaves  
and branches in gentle, increasing  
motion, combined with the beautifully  
orchestrated music make me think not  
of slasher films, but of the opening to  
Ruggero Deodato's *Cannibal Holocaust*.  
*Long Island Cannibal Massacre* is  
roughly contemporaneous with *Cannibal  
Holocaust* and I have to wonder if  
Schiff had intended to re-situate the  
structures and functions of the Italian  
Cannibal Cycle (at its zenith, no less) in  
his immediate community.

It is fascinating to think of what  
would have happened to slasher films  
if *Long Island Cannibal Massacre* had  
become the template for future advances  
in the field over *Friday the 13th*, with  
which it also shares a lush score and  
wooded, pastoral setting. It would have  
been a lonelier, stranger, world for  
certain.

Films like *Cannibal Holocaust*,  
*Friday the 13th* and *Long Island  
Cannibal Massacre* are about the loss  
of wilderness, of the unknown beyond  
civilization, and what is left of that  
fear, of that wonder. Wilderness is a  
projection of ignorance. It is a fiction  
made up to push against, to conquer.

Slasher films work by re-wilding  
what we think we know, by making them  
unexplored territory, where monsters  
lurk at every turn. Slasher movies are  
about the uncertainty of conquered

wilderness: what if there really is no civilization? What if human life is always at the mercy of chaos and the constant threat of lethality? What form would that take? Would it be someone with a broken pickaxe on the side of the road? It certainly could be. Cannibal films reawaken the sense of ourselves as prey. It is the nightmare of the apex predator, that one's species is not really as successful as it seems, or that we have run out of predators, and must ourselves assume that function.

It is notable to me that the first kill in the film, of the unfortunate sunbathing student, is conducted via a lawnmower—symbol of the controlled repression of uncontained life, the suppression of wilderness, forcing sterilized, lifeless geometries. When we turn these tools against ourselves, what we get is genocide, mass murder, imprisonment, slavery. What we get is *Long Island Cannibal Massacre*.

Nathan Schiff really has an eye for landscape cinematography and selecting the proper locations. The next scene in the film takes place on a rocky outcropping projected into the ocean on a beach. It is windy, sunlight filters through clouds to play upon the waves. A couple hold each other and talk about how the world is a rough place. Both of these opening scenes establish human presence as an intrusion. This is a film that understands human occupation of the land as an ongoing violence, a slow apocalypse.

A decomposing head is found buried in the sand of the beach, already in reclamation by the earth.

The sun sets, all action is impelled toward the night.

Piles of trash, animal skulls as makeshift geographical markers, detritus from the road.

This is a barely populated Long Island, deserted or never came to be.

The second act of *Long Island Cannibal Massacre* establishes a question: Texas is large, with low-population density in many places. What would it be like if a Cannibal Massacre happened in Long Island, in the waste places, the places where civilization never took? What about thinking of this as a criminal syndicate founded upon murder and the sale of human remains?

Light having faded already, gone under the horizon, shot through a stand of pines surmounting the water.

This is a film-making concerned with where the sun is at all times, light rushing parallel to the earth, an after-image or a breaking-upon.

The point where the roads literally end, *Long Island Cannibal Massacre* begins: the borderlands, the liminal places. Where field meets woods, where land meets water, where night meets day, where winter meets spring.

There are a lot of monologues in the film about the limits of human knowledge, human communication, human behavior, what society can and cannot achieve to alter or mitigate the scope of human activity.

This is a movie less about the society of feral cannibals that lives hidden within the world we know and more about the people who are gatekeepers and caretakers for that hidden society. What are their lives like? What must they do? In this way, *Long Island Cannibal Massacre* eerily prefigures *We Are What We Are*, also about the burdens of caring for a cannibal society living amongst the larger, more dominant one. In a sense, MURDERDRONE itself is like the mutant cannibal society hiding out in the inbetween places, the lonely areas of the larger landscape of Slasher Movies.

What lies beyond the radius of light?  
What lies beyond the radius of light?

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### **MAD MUTILATOR (1983)**

Vari-speed shot composition makes for a fractured, cubist sense of the progression of time and event.

One person after another leaves a car in the most awkward way possible, heading off into the forest to be axemurdered.

Ogroff, the axe-murderer of the forest, wears a knit-cap atop his medieval torture mask which seems incomplete. Maybe it is old. Maybe his axe is old. Maybe the forest is old.

People run at unnatural speeds, either slower or faster (or both) than would seem possible for being chased by someone with an axe along a dirt path or



for chasing someone along a dirt path with an axe.

An abundance of pulsing and twitching and oscillating, like if sound were successive cold or warm fronts moving over and around a central mass which was sometimes there and sometimes not—this inconstancy, this built-in instability, is key to *Mad Mutilator*.

Sounds that sound like the wind imagines itself to sound like at higher elevations, rising into the upper atmosphere, at incredible speeds.

The trees are a vice that is closing in and only Ogroff has an axe, which is to say, a key to solve the forest.

A swarming, a twangling, a pounding like on sheet metal but so far away.

*Mad Mutilator* is composed entirely of insert shots, shot at different times and sewn together later on. Because of this, *Mad Mutilator* feels like a silent comedy.

Ogroff is sad his quarry has left, so he walks back along the road, melancholy, with his axe on his shoulder. The woman's frantic cries for help are rejected by someone who steps out of the car that she has flagged to jump up and down with a crazy hat on before driving off. Ogroff is happy now that he can continue pursuing his quarry. It is day. It is evening. It is sunny. It is raining.

A tone between a cry and a wind-chime. The woman tries to decide something. Ogroff has cleverly disguised himself with a bicycle and an overshirt. The woman is wrestled to her doom—no, she is pushed along a dirt path with a bicycle by Ogroff. She runs away, but Ogroff gives chase, first having to disentangle his axe from the bicycle. Now it is day. Now it is night. Now it is day. It is a forest. It is a grassland.

[The pickaxe is the official weapon of MURDERDRONE. It looks good through an eyesocket, functional or not]

Ogroff's shack has a neatly made bed, a neatly displayed axe collection, and a bunch of severed hands. Some hang from the ceiling. Some are in a sink.

Ogroff has some kind of plaid office-shirt/sweater-vest/khakis thing happening.

Ogroff has a variety of stumps which are not only decorative, but which can

be used for a variety of butchering purposes.

It is day. It is night. It is day.  
Insects are awake. Insects sleep.  
Insects awake again.

A picnic gotten to by car in pine scrub should clearly be soundtracked by synthetic reggae. There should be chairs and a table there for your game of chess.

Someone should do a dub remix of *Mad Mutilator* except that it is, already, its own dub remix.

The basslines should be proto-hoovering, sweeping and crackling, there should be electro pings and echoes until everything is replaced all at once by all the keys depressed upon and organ and the wind howling again. Then, without warning, this dub remix should cut back to a synthetic reggae song because we were in the synthetic reggae song the whole time.

Ogroff will cheerfully ask for a cigarette, and then once he gets one, will go off, put on his mask and knit-cap, and then come back to put an axe through your chessboard, table, and face.

Ogroff likes to have kindling fires around, to help cauterize wounds for no reason or to lightly cook human flesh to eat.

Ogroff understands the world through his axes. They are his primary sensory and epistemic organs.

The primal, endlessly cycled event in *Mad Mutilator* is: someone stops a car along a dirt road in a wooded area. They get out of the car for some reason. They are chased and probably worse by Ogroff, who has an axe.

It is day. It is night. It is day.

A man is hanging by a rope from a tree. A person who has left the car cuts him down. He attacks her. She stabs him and runs away. She has a gun in the car. She shoots the man. He pulls the bullet from himself. She ties a rope to his neck and her car and drives away. She gets out of the car and smashes his decapitated head with a sizeable rock. This is the cycle of life in *Mad Mutilator*. Life is tragic and futile, whether pursued or pursuer.

There is an oak tree. Maybe it has acorns.

It is day. It is night.  
It is night. It is day.

Ogroff has a girlfriend. They snuggle and she helps out around the shack, burying severed limbs, doing laundry, etc.

It is here that *Mad Mutilator* reveals its true nature: that of the pastoral idyll, of the woodsman and his bride. This overlaps with the pastoral idyll of the passionate shepherd and his love.

The sky is pink with blood.

It is a beautiful day.

The days pass by, with dismemberment, waylaid tourists and passersby.

It is day. It is night.

Instead of a flock of sheep, Ogroff has a pit of zombies. He is a pastoralist, too.

The zombies and Ogroff's girlfriend get to re-enact the zombie-arms-through-the-wall scene from *Dawn of The Dead*. Everyone is having a good time until the zombie flock gets too excited and tries to eat Ogroff's girlfriend and he has to dismember them with an axe.

It is day. It is night. It is day.

Ogroff's girlfriend is panicked and wants to leave despite the fact that the zombie flock has been defeated. Ogroff is sad again, and kicks over his bike in melancholia.

Ogroff taking to the fields on a motorcycle, lopping off heads with his axe like a medieval knight on horseback is something I never knew I wanted until I saw it—and then I really wanted it.

Ogroff is the knight, the soldier, who is battle-scarred and who has gone to live in solitude in the woods and wants nothing more than to be left alone and tend to his zombie flock but keeps being bothered, having to hack people to death until he finds and loses love. It is an old story.

The second half of *Mad Mutilator* has a different engine. Once people stop getting out of cars to get mutilated, and once the zombie flock appears on the scene, the zombie army rises toward the sun to walk the earth again. The hand reaching from below the grass to grasp at the sky is now the predominant image, as is the zombie horde staggering in collective.

It is day. It is night.

There are frog-noises.  
There are zombie-respiration-noises.

It is day.

It is day. It is night.

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#### **NOTES ON MURDERDRONE 4**

In murderdrone, time becomes space and space becomes time.

There is no 'outside' in murderdrone. The entire world is a slasher movie, is composed of what composes slasher movies. What happens when slasher movies become worlds, become whole environments. In the classical slasher, a group of people from the everyday world enter into a situation or location which is heightened or unique, a fight-or-flight, live-or-die situation. There is a beginning, middle and an end. There is a mystery or puzzle to solve, to escape, to survive. There is a 'final girl' because there is the illusion of finality. In MURDERDRONE this is not possible because there is no beginning and no end.

Murderdrone is an enveloping. The synthesizer is the perfect instrument for murderdrone because it blurs the distinction between music and environmental, ambient sound, between music and space. Murderdrone becomes part of space, part of lived duration.

In the classical slasher, there is the experience of undergoing an ordeal, of passing through a ritual gauntlet. In murderdrone, this becomes mundane, becomes ordinary. The things that are extra-ordinary in murderdrone would be the quotidian details of living, of the getting-along of life. When they appear in murderdrone, and they do occasionally, they stand out because they are NOT what composes the world of murderdrone.

Murderdrone takes what is seen as the failing points of the classical slasher: its cyclical repetition, its abandonment of narrative, its disinterest in characterization, its perceived lack of overall structure and makes those the building blocks of a positive aesthetic.

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**DEVIL STORY (1985)**

spiked glove murder // maw of the earth

black horse neighs is as to negate  
  is as to  
the horizon is tracking gone bad  
the horizon is a bloodtrail gone cold  
there is only propulsion or  
there is only a leaking-out

the black cat meows behind white fleurs.  
the blonde girl in the black and  
white clothes summons fake lightning.  
she walks through the field, the field  
parts. she summons fake lightning onto  
the field.

the black cat cries against the white  
cliffs.

the man in the white clothes carries  
the blonde woman in the black and white  
clothes away from the white cliffs and  
the black cat and the fake lightning  
field.

the black horse neighs and patrols the  
cemetery gates or the gates that look  
like cemetery gates.

the black horse neighs and whinnys  
because something is coming from the  
bowels of the earth, from the cracks in  
the earth.

a cursed ship erupts from the earth,  
teeters upon the cliff spilling itself  
over

the black horse patrols the cemetery  
gates and whinnys and neighs and paces.

black horse guardian!  
black horse excavator!

a mummy erupts from in full  
sarcophagus, and opens.  
the mummy has come from the beyond.  
the mummy has come from  
the underworld. it has come to life by  
lantern-light and blue-filter. blue filter  
says fake thunder and midnight.

the mummy is hewn from the cliff.  
the mummy will collapse into powder.

black horse rears and canters and  
wheels  
hooves tearing at earth wildly

black horse rears and canters and  
wheels  
hooves tearing at earth wildly

arise! arise! corpse from the tomb!  
arise! arise!

crawl, crawl upon the belly of the earth!

collapse in slow motion and get up to  
run in slow motion — your hair like  
streamers trailing behind you

the black cat paws and licks at the earth  
cry your tears into the warm body of  
the earth.

face-flaps; internal bleeding; a long  
decay

goodbye we are leaving here to live  
among

the dead

goodbye we are leaving here to live  
among

the dead

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**TWISTED ISSUES (1989)**

I went to college in the early 1990's  
in Sarasota, FL and therefore spent a  
lot of time in Gainesville, FL getting  
high, hanging out, going to used  
record stores, blasting the hardcore  
and noise music and going to shows so  
*Twisted Issues* being a slice of FLA-  
core so immediate to me I feel I have  
been in some of these houses. Making  
what looks like a skate-clip video  
only to morph into psychedelic low-  
budget horror is perfect. I mean, this  
is kinda like *Slacker* (with which it is  
entirely contemporaneous) if Austin were  
Gainesville and Richard Linklater were  
a paranoid hardcore skate-rat making  
Z-Grade Horror and getting too high to  
go outside due to paranoia, which, like,  
didn't that happen?

Cruising around in cars, drinking  
beer, hanging out in the parking lots  
of convenience stores, walking home at  
night on badly paved sidewalks.

**HIGH ON VIOLENCE-  
INDUCED PSYCHOSIS**

Watching yourself die on TV with your  
totally boss Hellwitch shirt completely  
ruined forever sucks pretty hardcore.  
As *Twisted Issues* picks up steam, it  
becomes less a slice of life movie and  
more and more a slasher/killer flick

what with facial grafts, personality breakdown, mad science, edged weapons and mask-distortion?

Watching this I couldn't shake the feeling that I had met these people, walked with them, lived and died and drank beer/smoked weed with them.

As a tribute and a record to Charles Pinion's sense of Gainesville-as-Home and his friends there, this is a tremendous labor of love, a full-length movie on video when that was super-difficult.

More than any other MURDERDRONE film, *Twisted Issues* has thematic, formal, and aesthetic relations with the NYC-based Cinema of Transgression, and indeed, Charles Pinion's follow up to *Twisted Issues*, *Red Spirit Lake* would feature major parties associated with that movement. Even without this sense of historicity, we have this awesome record of late-eighties skatepunk DIY slasher horror!

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### **SCARY MOVIE (1989)**

*Abandon Hope, All Y'all Who Enter Here*

Having a regional lets-put-on-a-community-haunted-house thing going on is what makes *Scary Movie* work like it does. Halloween night, a bunch of college kids, an escaped psycho killer, what's not to like? Any movie that can make the impaled aquarium skeleton creepy is good by me.

*Scary Movie* is a pretty great movie about the collapsing of inside and outside, making the whole of the world into a haunted house, which is exactly what Halloween does. This is a movie fundamentally about anxiety, about the anticipation of something frightening. This is extended to almost absurd lengths (the wait to go into the haunted house, the wait for the psycho killer to show up on the scene) until the anticipation, the build-up, becomes the thing itself. This is really how *Scary Movie* fits into the MURDERDRONE schema, but frontloaded, unusual for a MURDERDRONE film.

There is a kid in this movie who has a comfort Universal Monsters Wolfman Doll called 'Wolf-Wolf'. This gets to the heart of *Scary Movie*, in its displays

of how we create intermediary places to negotiate anxiety, either temporal (Halloween) or spatial (the community Haunted House).

This is a movie about bad omens and nameless dread. This is a movie about how those things are weird shadows of what is really coming to get you.

This is as good a snapshot of the local community Haunted House in the late 1980's U.S.A. as we are going to get in a fictional movie.

*Scary Movie* is brilliant because it turns the 'hangout' aspect of the slasher inside-out, inverting the threat matrix and the tempo and architecture of the genre like no film I have ever seen.

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### **SATANWAR (1979)**

SATANWAR // "Full Version Featuring Black Mass Intro" // SATANWAR  
"The House That Dripped The Stuff Before It Tasted Good" / SATANWAR /// SATANWAR

*I'm not going to be molested just so you don't have to take out the garbage!*

SATANWAR

Like listening to a barely functional "Dark Side of the Moon" cassette that gets stuck in your mono recorder and is being eaten slowly as the batteries wind down home alone by yourself after school as night falls and yet still no one comes home.

SATANWAR

This movie gives me demonic PTSD flashbacks of early 80's residences. *Satan War* is a war fought fitfully while ominously unpacking salt and pepper shakers and tea kettles; while the male lead's contribution involves lighting one cigarette after another and sitting down grumpily in shorts. As problems in the house continue, a woman who is probably the best New Age Medium ever seen on film explains 'it's not ghosts, it's demons' in partial trance while sitting on a hideous couch.

SATANWAR!!!!

If *The Amityville Horror* and *The Entity* exist as roommates in some awful tract house from a parallel dimension, *Satan War* is how we get to experience this.

SATANWAR!

The people in this movie act as though they have just been released from

occult bondage and are still feeling the burn. There is a truly awesome abstract and psychedelic intro with the indelible SATANWAR theme burrowing and tunneling into it, which leads into a freeform interpretive dance rendition of a black mass which then leads into the best mock-Dragnet/Health Films voiceover explanation that SATANWAR is neither a documentary nor a mockumentary nor an exact re-enactment but is all true anyway. The best trick that Satan pulled off is to make you think your TV is working adequately when in fact all it is broadcasting is roll and pitch and presumably backward-masked demon voices hidden in static.

SATANWAR!!!

We can only hope that Realtor.com prevents the next Satan War before it ever begins, but did it ever end??? Answer: No! Satan War does not ever, in fact, end, but transmogrifies into a Beyond Questionable Voodoo Disinformation PSA because, you know, why not?

*Whether or not they have supernatural powers from Satan is beside the point.*

SATANWAR!!!



# WITCH THOUGHTS ON MURDER- DRONE FILMS AS REAGENTS FOR RITUAL MAGICK

CLAIRE COX

In their initial stage at least – in that golden age in the late 70s thru the mid 80s – I see slashers as fantasies of resistance. Sometimes these fantasies were deeply embedded, fractional, obscure, or merely suggested. Often they were in an incipient, nonverbal, embryonic state. But they were there. Amazingly, there were these visions of resistance, beamed out to me like electric light. At very least, to me, the films could be reclaimed as those fantasies.

The fantasy is US, the Final Girls destroying the psychic avatars of oppression, simultaneously exorcising the psychic control flow of MENTAL COLONIZATION from the brainspace. An excoriation. We could slash the controls from our brains. They were dreams of feminine rebellion.

And even more key, for me, these films are spaces where the meaning of “Girl” is fluid. And they opened a psychic rift for me, where I began to spill and bleed raw gender, until I knew I was that Girl, too.

I like to conjure it with names: Cinema of Disruption, Fantasies of Revolution, Cinema of Altering. They are feminine fantasies because they dramatize feminine fears. And revolutionary because men empathize, identify. They may emerge from the binary this way, but they begin to posit spaces where gender is Not Stable, where it shifts and flows, where the categories are fundamentally broken: the Final Girl arming herself with a Phallic blade (or Chain Saw).

The key is the briefest moments of breaking, where the Final Girl transcends gender coding and enters a non-gender space of utter disruption and sorcerous banishment, ripping apart the phantom that has imposed the duplication and system in the first place. For he is its Agent and Avatar. He is its Body.

We wake from the nightmare back into the coded reality, but there is this fantasy of disruption. The Fantasy of removing yourself from the culture, total rejection, abandonment.

Now, when I call Trauma a kind of home and my hull sits damaged and immobile, or a crawling mecha-torso, I can call upon these Visions. They are comfort and balm, and I begin to Unlearn the old Commands. They are restorative fantasies. They animate my brain, trapped in psychic paralysis, to dream of better states, to dream of WAYS OUT. Healing Magic. This is the White Magick of the

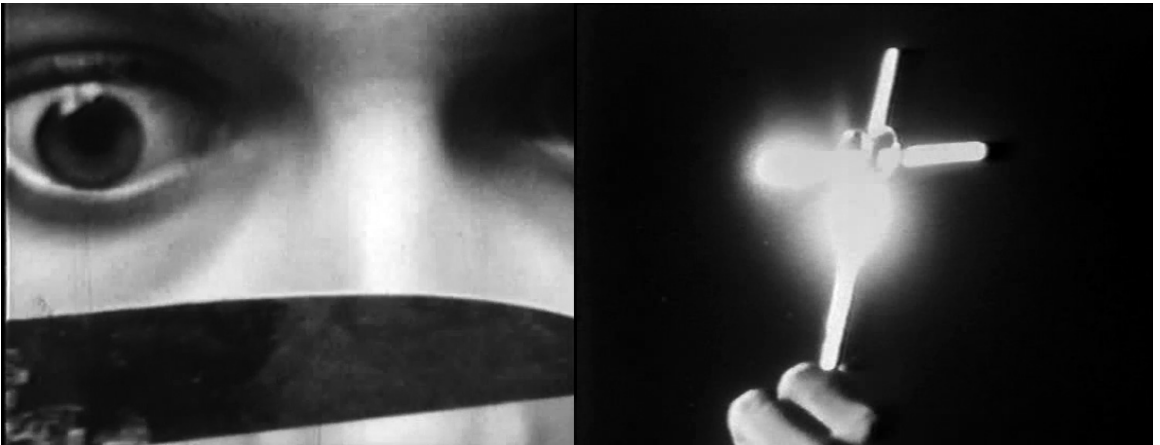
Slasher, hidden in the Veil of Evil.

But all this is in the Substance, the DRAMA, of the Slasher, the “What” that happens. But the enthusiast will likely come to Love the films for qualities harder to qualify: moments of character (Strip Monopoly), pauses and punctuations, a kind of slackness, and perhaps most of all: Atmosphere and Mood. There is a quieter magic in these pieces. There are fragments of kind dreams.

Friends talking, the hush of the woods, the chill of the night. Pauses in the transmission. Channels of ambient Disruption.

Something lies in the gaps and hesitations, humming and vibrating subliminally in the Atmosphere and the Mood. Slashers are our nightmares of living under patriarchy. But the Slasher has its own nightmares.

And they are called MURDERDRONE.



MURDERDRONE is the Slasher as Magick. It is the congealed distillate of the Slasher. MURDERDRONE is a dream of the Void. MURDERDRONE is The End. It is the Anti-Transmission and the Anti-Miasma.

Part of the Magick lies in what I think of as the cinema verite quality of low budget films. This has, for me, two major facets. One: an accidental documentary quality. The lower the budget, the more you're seeing “real” places, real people, sometimes non-actors. You're seeing completely in-camera effects. Two: the low budget frequently results in distortions of this reality. This might be seen in bad audio, poor lighting, awkward dialogue (or, as you will see in many MURDERDRONE films, no live audio: essentially resulting in the movies being filmed as silent). These factors fundamentally alter the material experience of viewing the film. And these two qualities compete with one another.

I am fascinated that “mistakes” can contribute to making a film wonderfully dreamlike. How they warp the experience of the film on a technical level. In black metal, when guitar and drums can't be distinguished, a bizarre new wall of sound emerges. Deviations from the established norm have a raw distorting effect, like a clean guitar run through cheap FX pedals into a 4-track, drowned in hiss, and the tape submerged in water and then damaged by the sun.

MURDERDRONE has many magickal properties, but perhaps its most potent is its Lo-Fi Primitivism, found in: primarily natural lighting, shooting outdoors, “cheap” synthesizer music. There are elements of “bad” process: discontinuous editing, utter

slackness in pacing, minimal or improvised scripts. These are the filmic equivalents of tape hiss or recording in the red. Almost fundamentally, these ‘techniques’ alter our sense of the movie’s reality. Unlike the Slasher proper, murderdrone – whether by happenstance or intention – disrupts not only our narratives but our expectations of what a film should be.

What characterizes murderdrone is the unique manner of its disruption. It channels the Violence of the Slasher, but it does so with slowness, slackness, the crawling pace of mystic syrup. It creeps like Doom. It is Glacial. It is “boring” cinema. But this is Key to its effect. It does not seek to create mythologies or narratives or ideologies or theories to resist Capitalism. Instead, it slows like Heat Death, and it converts the language of the Slasher into Voidic Cryptograms. All Signs & Portents of the Void. Entropic Vibration Punk. And it documents the Irruptions of the Void into the dreams that nightmares have. It is VISION.

I write in a storm of damage/anxiety/depression/loops. Forgive the insubstantial Words and follow this pointing & I will be Gladde. What the Spelle is: The spells which follow extract the principles of the Miasma’s Mind Control and produce reagents for the casting of Mind Control spells for the lay practitioner or the hedge witch/wizard. It is primary poisons, but they are reeking of haunted death. To cast these spells is to enter the Borderland, with its many small gods. Here is the Frog God and his highway cult. Here is Dissolution, Mysticism. Here is Submergence. Here is the diffusion of the Feminine. Here is taking the Miasma’s power to cast your own Irrational Spells: Aquatic, Solar, Cloud. How the Spell Works: I call it: Cinema of Reclamation, the cinema that transcends itself.

#### DRONE:

\*\*\*\*\*Narcotic / Hypnotic/Psychedelic (Trance):

Looping is the primary Hypnotic factor. The Slasher experimented with this, distilling its narrative into repetitions of Stalk/Kill/Pause/Repeat. Genre repeats this process in variations film to film. Murderdrone’s primary Component is the Loop. But the tape has gone slack, the camera will pause on the sun (see *Folies Meurtrieres* for the beauty of pauses). It causes Drone and opens the Channels by inducing a hypnotic-narcotic effect, through slack Loop of narrative’s charred remnant and the drone of electronic sound (the Holy synthesizer).

#### MURDER:

\*\*\*\*\*Void/End/Ritual Confrontation of Deathe:

The Deterioration & Murder of the Movie Itself

The unique interplay of form and content, melting into charred black tar. Light *Texas Chain Saw Massacre* or *The Hills Have Eyes* on fire & imbibe the tar. They are not of interest primarily for their variation, so much as their formal Effect & Affect.

They register in Primal, Primordial, Pre-Emotional ways. They resonate their Effect in the Body-Mind, in Intestinal Brain. The Slackness, Slow Time Dilation is key to modified Effect of the Kill. No longer is the film’s subject the Intrusion into the mundane space of Normal Reality (capitalist suburban illusion). Murderdrone constitutes a full-on oneiric space in which the shattering, irruptive quality of violence is highly diluted from brief high-spike potency into omnipresent miasma that coats and accumulates, like tar or resin. MD is emitted from the wounds the slasher put into “normal” reality. Or, MD is what is on the other side of the psychic wound: the new Portal. Savini Hatchet to the Head is an opening of a psychic rift, peerings into the void.



Murderdrone is the land of that void and all of its horrible, ineffable Substance. It speaks in cryptograms or alien languages—intellectually unintelligible in the traditional sense—it must speak in psionic emissions / transmissions. It posits new epistemic categories of whole body & soul affective states. It is fundamentally a cinema of Altering, that works harder than most revelatory vision cinema to conjure / cast & ensorcell the viewer into new states of somatic being. To the point, it is best for being accidental; the raw, experimental state of what peering through the slasher wound has shown us. Like hedge wizards or cultic neophytes happening upon evil formulæ and replicating/casting them without fully understanding them. Murderdrone becomes a vehicle for transmission of psychedelic affective body states. It maps the negative space around cinema, intimating the boundaries & borderlands of cinema's traditional epistemic regions. That it lies in "trash" is more to its profound virtue, for it pulses with the Vital Force of Life. It is profoundly haunted by the vilest immaterial ghosts of Void & Death, but it sees the rot of the contemporary structure in the light and denigrates it violently with mocking parody. It longs for more. It is the deepest and truest irony of paradox: the Drone oscillates in endless movement and undulation. It magnetizes and possesses the body, casting it into trance. But it does so to transmit its undulations, the sheer fact of which contradict and slough the layers of epistemic complacency that produced the nightmares in the first place. This is why Ogroff (whom I hope you will meet!) begins to seem a hero by the end of his film. Violence in film can be base/banal/materialist/plainly misogynistic — but it can also be a rich formal catalyst for affective states — a symbol language that is neither symbol nor language — but inducements to the Primal Movement that constitutes the Quickening of the Human against the stillness of the void. Epistemic violence against staid and oppressive orders irrupt in Cinema as material Damages. (We know better.) Murderdrone is revolutionary cinema because it knows the contemporary state—not just the socio-political continuum, but the deep mental colonization and reification of its values and consciousness state—dominates vision.

The original Slasher is a haunted intimation of the force that sinews this kind of Mind Control or Possession. Murderdrone goes further and trances us into revolutionary blankesses that slough off stillness and grant clarities where new, unsullied visions can bloom. Murderdrone is the nightmare that loves you. Murderdrone is a clearing state, conjured from the necessary genealogy of its slasher antecedents. In some ways, the ultimate distillate of the original revolutionary impulse. However fragmentary this impulse becomes or however imperfectly it functions as "cinema" are wholly beside the point. The value is extra-cinematic and magickal. It becomes a reclaimable thing and potent reagent for your own Psychic Rituals Against the Terror of Psychic Colonization by Kyriarchy. It fights mind control with new mind control. Like a benediction, it privileges the act of transmission and the mode of transmission and the process of transmission over its message.

But when heard, the message tends one way: intimations of fragmentation, collapse, disruption, shattering extended as a new state. What is left in the mind is a kind of clarity and shattering of kyriarchical structures. It is fundamentally against "internalized oppressions"—the ways in which thoughts are controlled subliminally by reifying the dominant ideology into the substance of your thought. It takes the tools of cult possessions and possesses with the emptiness of the trance, conjures dream states and sleep to disrupt the trajectories of Kyriarchal orders. It is sub-linguistic and speaks in images or to the body Directly by manipulating the senses. It causes the Effect of Possession & Mind Control without the corresponding transmission. It merely opens a Channel and sends No Data. It is a Great Opening. (See *Satan War* for more details—the earliest of the murderdrone films, it is the template for extracting the Process of Ritual from its context for use by the lay practitioner.) Now we can rest in the drone and capture the resonances of "total assault on the culture." But know: it is necessarily a fragmentary cinema. It cannot hope to be totalizing. It's low-budget, a cinema of enthusiasts (disciples) & pilgrims, it carries an obsessed nature that precludes any totalizing system. It speaks to us in familiar languages but it says something that cannot be understood. It is the bleak remnant of some utopian dream that said revolution was possible in the here and now. It has questions about freedom. Cede to the Void and mutate. Alter. Undulate. Be a living body. Cede control to

the body, which still is free. It is subliminal irruptions of light. Intimations, hints, whispers, breakings. It can't save us, but it can point the way.

Genres constitute *more-than-auteur* bodies of work. They congeal fragments into wholes; variation (film-to-film-to film) is peering between the gaps, into the warmth of bizarre frictions.

MURDERDRONE says NOTHING. It is Emptiness. And in opening Us to this Void, the Miasma dissolves in the sheer Totality of Nothingness. In this way, it is the fundamental rejection of masculine, Apollonian orders. Of its hard, clear lines. They are utterly disintegrated. And raw girlstuff is left: the substance of No Gender, the dissolved bonds reconstituting into wholes our Brains are not yet shaped to see. It is a New Life, the ways of which we do not Know.

Here is one trajectory of the Spell:

The caster is embedded with trauma: cultural damage = voicelessness = silence = exclusion = nonexistence via atomization and destruction of community. Then there is Ogroff destroying everything and summoning cosmic Chaos and the Apocalypse. It is Satanic Revolt and Black Magick.

And all Sorcery and Satanism is Profound Love for Life Against Those who would Eat it From You. For girls hand in hand and the Cosmic Sisterhood of New Mountains and new Psychic Landscapes. For the undreamed of places waiting to be born. Drone Light the Way. What Follows is a partial Liste of Reagents and Spells. But the Chiefest Spelle is SATANWAR.



*recovered hieroglyphs in the Name of*

SATANWAR

I have been possessed by its vibrating synthscape. It is dream seeding my subconscious with cryptic DRONE commands. I'm trance-damaged in the lingering VHS haze. This is not really about a haunted house. It is about the haunting of SPACE by TIME. About slow motion. The music is key, it dictates and orders the temporality. Causing the slow drifts of motion (Flowing Liquids in Space). The title music making the paintings seem to shift. The slow oscillations of the synthesizers. The stilted acting illustrating the complexity of the human brain misunderstanding physical reality, distanced from it, separated from raw temporality. Ritual of return. It LIVES in bad & damaged transfers. Seek the VHS haze, the VHS Murk. Scenes of imperceptible motion. The scene is so dark, we cannot tell if a figure is there. We are Dreading movement.

After a conversation at the beach, ostensibly an establishing shot of the house, but haunted with the ghost of movement (the trees barely swaying). Everything vibrates/flickers with subtle half-seen motion. We read subtle figures in darkness. The Dub distances us from Space, but the music completely drowns out the dialogue. Repetition and congealed ambiguous movement, even the beginning and end are repetitions of one another, making a kind of reflexive whole. It impregnates your subconscious with dreams you never had, wake up and think them yours, no referent outside of itself. Self-replicating images. Lull, trance you, and imbed, seed themselves. Artifacts of psychic colonization, like dream spores. Lo-fi form produces bizarre abstraction/impressionistic or embellished impressions of or amplified versions: at 58 minutes, the cacophony of the s/t swells. The Phantom is in the house. Deep in murk, half-lit in tight framing: a face, a gun, darkness, a light playing off the gun, the flashing of the Giallo knife, all a sea of abstract motion. Renders the experience viscerally ambiguous and difficult to read and thus suspenseful in a dreamy way. The image distilled into its primary pieces, then abstracted further, until a figure with a knife becomes a blur, a glow—one, piercing condensed image, cradled in sound. Hypnotic, narcotic psychic implantation. Haze and Sleep Magick. Some demons from the invisible world. A rift opened: movie as suggestion, mind control. I was possessed by the movie.

-----THE THAUMATURGICAL KEYS-----

The film begins and ends with “documentary” footage of a Satanic black mass and a voodoo ritual. At first, the you wonder why this is here when it seems to bear no relation to the house story. But it surfaced for me: the rituals described in the bookend are replicated BY the film. The voodoo segment outlines the filmic project: the music puts them into a trance, then the invisible comes and possesses them. The film is a ritual in the guise of a haunting story. A genre film that is itself haunted. What sounds like a soundtrack is actually a PRESENCE. It wants to get inside you. Or is it a spell. Danvala, the serpent, the only voodoo god who does not speak, but transmits his wishes telepathically. (Note some diabolical interlocking when the *Satan War* soundtrack overlaps WELL with the voodoo drumming.) *Satan War* may appear to be a simple, lowbudget genre film, but do not be fooled. The voodoo discussion doesn't emphasize the MESSAGE so much as it does the TRANSMISSION: the passing of data, the motion, the process, the state of trance. The film is about abstracting the trance from the context of possession, a magickal dabbling. SATANWAR is a spell to be cast on oneself, taught to magicians by evil. And the film is a haunted artifact or reagent. It is alchemical black magic, the viewer attempts to transmute from what may variably appear to be some inert matter (dull, earthy, useless), or else something forbidden (the guise of DANGER). But it is a tool for magicians and witches. The synth is the key to it all. It is the voodoo drum. The chief reagent in the spell, the activator of the other components, the divine or Satanic hallucinogen. The invoker. Likewise, the Black mass is about communications and commandments by an entity or force, a possession, but it does not emphasize what is requested, what is to be done, merely the fact of the possession. This movie is a magickal intervention that attempts to subvert the hypnotic, magickal quality of ritual for individual use, outside the context of possession. Trucking in dangerous territory, in a mythical sense, it creates a filmic artifact for individual psychonautics. The tools of mind control and possession adapted for ritual practice. Possessions are hierarchical. This movie wants to possess you, but it is not itself an entity and thus cannot transmit any commands, it merely delivers the process of that

temporary possession without attendant commandments. It is a magickal pull for the sake of the magickal, ritual act. A reflexive experience. A possession by nothing. It is homemade reproduction of ritual, with the genre film as the vessel. The movie does not produce EVIL and it has no Goal. It merely reproduces its own state, it produces the state of trance. A viral consciousness. Can it be bled into the world?

#### LONG ISLAND CANNIBAL MASSACRE

Hedge wizardry in service to one of the baleful gods on capitalism's edge. Renders the ostensible "mystery" of genre trope fundamentally meaningless in the face of an evil god & full-on Lovecraftian nightmare, announcing the void on the edge: *a family still needs the raw substance of food*. Capitalism twisted to its terrible parodic edge. This is the Slasher's End Point. The decay or corpse of the Slasher. Along with *LUNCH MEAT* this fulfills the genre's obsession with cannibalism as an extension of the capitalist greed motive, the inherent self-destructive tendency of Capitalism, and finalizes the subversion of the Nuclear Family by completing its inversion. It is the Cannibal Family on Society's fringe, persisting in unholy mockery after Death. I had an Experience watching this. I am still Reeling from it. This is the clashing at the edges, the eruptions along the leylines, wild assertions of cosmic volatility, the rift and the void. Conjured with the unmistakable enthusiasm of the truest hedge wizard. Sea waves, flowing grasses, the froggish mutant god hidden in the Dark Places of the Earth. Raw outlaw primitivism. The primordial Caveman scripture: it sinewed me with ruptures. it was radioactive Weird Renewal. it lit my intestinal kerosene fluid and activated some howling gut sapience to channel extradimensional rock and roll vibrations from the Morlock dimension: it is a slow damage sentience warp, neural witchcraft in the thrum and hum of its Life Force, makes the Screen permeable, and masticates the time-space divide into a churning thresh of Divine Possibility and Kick Out the Jams sun worshipping netherpunk. I'm channeled by the sunshine possessionwave into arcologies stretched across the ethereal demiplanes.



#### LUNCH MEAT

& I think I am in another dimension. There's inevitably a certain point where the dronespell starts drifting me to half-sleep and I enter the Haze Realm where the drone starts sending subliminal transmissions directly into my subconscious, causing this cascade of looping, non-linear Weird-void-vision. Spewing unintelligible cryptograms accessible only for reptilian brain decoding but still with profound psychedelic-hypnotic effect: the slasher of Cosmic Blight, of what pulses in the liminal spaces: corrupted distortions of normality (the Cannibal) masticate at the edges of Order. Some borderland anti-cinema. & in the First Kill scene, with the drone throbbing way up and the chaos of it all, the ragged howlings of Everyone—it feels like the wailing of the damned had started bubbling up from the earth. Strange ritual and even stranger obeisance: cinema of Altering. Cinema for mutants. Waves/beams/clouds of radiation. Ego-eroding Punk cascades of Undoing. Like they took what are superficially slasher movies and boiled them down into some evil caustic bubbling witch-goop, and when it burns the smoke causes subliminal vision damage. The drone is the Heat and the Flame & me, hopeless slime thrall—accepting the Altering (!)



### MAD MUTILATOR

The “apotheosis” of the drone as the key to the apocalyptic end. A progression to The End. The Living Drone—Drone as Holy Intoxicant for Ritual Void Worship. Consciousness-less submission to possession.

The Celestial & final transmutation of the slasher “villain” into hero who hacks apart “Movie” through raw epistemic violence. Challenging the possession of psychic violence, mental illness and psychic damage as remnants of capitalist-sexist-patriarchal violence and mind control, Ogroff the hero who slashes and smashes consciousness and incites apocalypses, which biblically speaking, are revelations. I’m afraid there really aren’t going to be words to capture or explain what happened to me. This is the ultradrone. This is the megatrance. This is beyond slasher mythology, theory. This is the left hand path. This is the DRONE from the crypt. “Movie” mutilated into a thousand fragmentary images. A sea of dislocations. A profusion of broken images. The sudden moon. Vampire in a sea of candles. Redolent of endless decay. This is the true mindwarp cinema. It turns consciousness to some holy syrup. Turns thoughtwave to mystic sludge. Plunges the viewer into liminal hyperspace: some golden temple of frozen time: genre as collapse and collage. The slasherdrone opens the portal to the zombie endworld: Ogroff is the key! Ogroff is the gate! It all rests in the holy sound: the cosmic blood: the slow oscillations like waves over the soul: endless permutations: restless searching for holy frequencies. THEN: impressions of aquatic sunshine, overcast night, an exponential array, compulsive suggestions of inexplicable secrets all pointing One Way. It IS discontinuity, temporal shift, dilation, collapse, warp, confused montage. A labyrinth of broken cinema. It is movie as one of the Living Dead. Those glowing eyes in the phone booth—in the night sky. ALL is undead. ALL. The drunken/narcotic sun/sea damaged Trance effect of *Oasis of the Zombies Amplified*.

But how deeply, sweetly, madly soaked in sound: howling, roaring, moaning, the forever mutation of oscillator, every sound creating a cascade of echo and repeat and repeat. Rain, night, the infernal eyes of the entire universe reanimated in the Final Cosmic eruption. Cinema of disruption: MELT MY MIND MELT MY MIND MELT MY MIND Selah

### FOLIES MEURTRIERES

The ultimate slasher distillate, the reagent, The Terrestrial Madness, the deterioration of the soul through the vector of the body. I am for sure prone to ecstatic hyperbole, but I think there may be a real chance that this is the DRONE pinnacle. This must be one of the (un)holy relics of the whole slasher multiverse. Like if a tape recorder caught the slasher movie's nightmares of itself in a haze of echoing, overlapping feedback waves. The purest slasher veneer, like a flapping curtain emitting black smoke wind from the VOID: the slasher movie dreaming it has died, that it has been reanimated by foul gods. Its corporeal body is the same, though rotting, but it is possessed by streams of souls and speaks with the twisted harangue of lichs. Planar spanning alien Voice emitting from beyond the bounds of the body. DRONE is the symbol-word: intimations of vibrations of premonitions of the end;;; the camera comes zooming out of the skeletal maw in the green flame netherworld of THE END. Sleep spell/sleep magic of the highest apocalyptic order. Meant for the most daring practitioner. Filmic narcotics to fly to all the Yuggoths of the black galaxies beyond the timid earth, wearing the parodic mask of known things. It opens its eye and envelopes you in the sun. Children of the sun/of the dark/of the grave given the Thought Command: undulate for somatic hypnosis, reduced to component matter.

### DEVIL STORY

A last vision of absurd cosmic futility—the abdication of violence—the endless horse; announcement of the ritual's futility. It is the Endless Dilation of Time. It is Ritual for Ritual's Sake. It is the cultist laughing at the Black Mass. The Ritual can never capture the horse.







*MURDERDRONE* distills slasher film rules down to their most basic components.

Whether it is the simplicity of the “man in the mask” that drives *Day of the Reaper* and *The Mad Mutilator*, the ADD free-form ambition of *Devil Story* and *Twisted Issues* or the palpable human anxiety that drives *Lunch Meat* and *Scary Movie*, these are amateur films that have latched on to one real, true fear and have made it corporeal. And then they exploit that fear again and again until it is all but meaningless...

The term *MURDERDRONE* is evocative of repetition... The perpetual rhythm in these films is nightmarish in its own way, but each time a murder or attack occurs, the inevitability of it happening again is both more enticing and more exasperating. Each murder builds upon the last, not just in terms of quantity, but also by eliciting a sense of hopelessness and ultimately, acceptance.

And so strong is our desire to demystify death, that even when we know exactly what’s coming we choose to stick around and watch anyway.

—from the Introduction

